

Art and Handicap in Texas

Students from Spring Branch Independent School District in Houston Texas participate in the Arts Olympiad. They participated in a torch lighting ceremony, archery, and other activities. All students received medals presented by 2000 USA Olympian Eric Thomas.



Unlike other Arts Olympiads held around the world, the Spring Branch Independent School District in Houston, Texas created a unique format for students to actively combine an Olympic sport competition with making art.

With the help of volunteers, 44 students with physical and mental handicaps participated in twelve events that combined art and sport, including: boxing with painted gloves, painted feet hurdles, archery with painted nerf arrows, and shot put with foam Frisbees.

Of course, an Olympic event would not be complete without a torch lighting ceremony, and the children of Spring Branch were treated with the world's first neon torch made by two Houston area artists. Once in place, the torch filled the gymnasium with a glowing bright orange light, and signaled the beginning of the games.

Activity and color soon filled the gym, as each event created a "whirlwind of action, abstraction, laughter and joy." The finished result: sixteen canvases that captured the activity of each event, best described as "wild splashes and Olympic explosions of color."

In the closing ceremony, Eric Thomas, a 2000 USA Olympian in Track and Field awarded the artistic athletes with a medal, as the surrounding torchlight highlighted the "thrill and pride in their wide eyes."

With teaching and coaching backgrounds, the organizers Jody and David Butler were inspired to create this unique Arts Olympiad from a fellowship they earned to travel to Greece and



Naomi Malyar (7) Texas, U.S.

Italy to study ancient sculptures and their relationship to the modern Olympic Games.

After meeting with archaeologists, artists, athletes and traveling to Olympia, the site of the first Olympic Games, they were inspired by their experiences and an article in ChildArt Magazine to arrange the Arts Olympiad for the children of Spring Branch.



The Croatian First Lady Inspires

Croatia may seem like a distant country that has little in common with you; however, the third Arts Olympiad has helped connect children from all over the world through art making and sport.

The Croatian Arts Olympiad was organized by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports. A national celebration was hosted at the Croatian Olympic Center outside the capital of Zagreb for 30 winners. For this two-day event, these young artists from all over the country gathered with their parents and teachers to compete and participate in art and sport activities and attend a culminating award ceremony.

The children got to know each other through the creation of group posters while their teachers headed to the classroom for a lesson from the Institute of Education. Afterward, the children celebrated their participation in the Arts

Olympiad and their new friendships with an evening of dancing and karaoke. To rest up for the busy second day, the children were treated like true Olympians, staying in dorms normally reserved only for Olympic athletes.

The second day began with sports lessons for the children while the adults were treated by a visit from the Croatian First Lady Milka Mesic. Later in the day, there was much excitement from everyone as the Croatian star swimmer Gordan Kozulj arrived to show his support.

The closing ceremony brought together friends who had been strangers two days before, and celebrated the creativity of all the participants, encouraging them to continue to explore and develop their imagination and involvement in sports. The first lady congratulated the winner and all the children were awarded a certificate from the ICAF and the Croatian Ministry for their hard work, recognizing the importance of each individual child's creative expression.

To close the celebration, everyone gathered for photographs with the first lady and swimmer Gordan Kozulj—preserving these wonderful memories forever.



Apolonjia Lucic (10) Croatia



Agata Lucic (10) Croatia

Israel Gives a Lesson in Integration

In order to introduce the Arts Olympiad in Israel, a conference was organized for art and sport instructors at the Israeli Sport Institute by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport. Lectures presented art and sport in history, including ancient Greek vase paintings, early photography and a visual history of the grace of human athleticism and movement. Also, along with the ICAF curricula, teachers were encouraged to brainstorm integrative and engaging classroom activities.

Upon conclusion, the instructors left the conference with new inspiration to implement the Arts Olympiad in their schools across Israel. The 200 participating schools within six regions held individual exhibitions of submitted artwork, encouraging both digital and two-dimensional entries. For each region, a committee chose twenty artworks that were sent to the national exhibition at the Ministry of Education in Tel Aviv and then onto the Ministry in Jerusalem.

In May 2006, the opening of the exhibition welcomed the artists, their teachers, art and sport inspectors, educational leaders of the six regions and the Ministry of Education Director. Of all the entries, a panel of judges that included artists, museum educators and teachers selected two finalists.

From the perspective of Dr. Naomi Jaffe, the Arts Olympiad



Yarden Arditi (9) Israel

has become a great national celebration in Israel. Combining the elements of art and sport has helped unite children through shared ideas that are supported by history and the positive development of the future.

New Zealand's Art Houses



Matthew Bastion (9) New Zealand

As the ICAF partner, the Children's Art House Fund arranged the Arts Olympiad in the nation of New Zealand. The Art House Fund seeks to ensure the right for all children to explore their creativity with safe and valued community projects, supporting the development of creative children in assuring creative communities. Through the use of community art centers called art houses, twenty-five separate competitions were held before the final round of judging and exhibition. A majority of the art houses used the ICAF lesson plan, organizing activities integrating sport and art.

In New Zealand sports take center stage. In fact, it is known as one of the world's best countries for extreme sports. However, through the Arts Olympiad, children of New Zealand gained a new perspective on the importance of the arts. They also recognized a need for new policies related to public funding of arts programs in their schools. In helping to open a dialogue between the Children's Art House Fund and the government, the participating children voiced their words and expressed their feelings about the lack of art programs available to them.

Another remarkable story emerged in Parawera, a small school in the Waikato Region, where children created exceptional wire sculptures for the competition. The school has a small population of thirty-seven students of Maori descent (the indigenous

people of New Zealand) and drew on a long tradition of sculpture carving and art making for their entries. Parawera is an example of how connecting children from remote areas to global ideas and goals in very much within reach.

Once each art house finished their individual exhibit and voting process, the art works were sent to the National Conference of the New Zealand Children's Art House Fund. An exhibition of 100 finalists took place at Kihikihi Town Hall, on the North Island in Central New Zealand in November 2005. A panel of judges comprised of professors, principals and art house artists and coordinators that made the final decision on the winning work. The exhibition was opened by Maori leader Kaumatua Koro Maikuku and Dr. Ian Hassall, former Commissioner for Children. The Second Arts Olympiad winner, Ella Gordon Latty, who participated in the ICAF 2003 festival in Washington, D.C., also addressed the gathering and advocated arts education.

With the help of the Children's Art House Fund, the New Zealand Arts Olympiad has established a stronger voice for arts advocacy and its impact on children's creative futures. Importantly, the Olympiad has inspired New Zealand's children to take interest in their educational opportunities, taking charge of ensuring the necessary tools for a better tomorrow.



Chun Yat Wong (12) Hong Kong



One Million Chinese Artists



Yu Kiu Chan (11) China

With the largest population in the world, there is enormous potential for artistic growth in China. As the ICAF partner in China, the Shanghai Cultural Development Foundation (SHCDF) initiated a program to help reach that potential. Now, looking back on this first endeavor, the executive director of SHCDF, Professor Shen Genlin, estimates more than one million Chinese children participated in the Arts Olympiad.

After contacting and sending the ICAF lesson plans to schools, the SHCDF also helped launch a series of activities on the themes "My Favorite Sport," starting in June 2005. These activities included a sport sketching summer camp and various community mural projects. Although many schools became involved and carried out the lessons, the SHCDF reached an even greater number through the use of television media.

Sports and athletic competitions have long been a part of Chinese culture, as ancient archeological relics have



Vienca Wan Ka Chan (11) Hong Kong

provided evidence of activities such as archery and competitive lifting as a part of everyday life over four thousand years ago. Today, with the upcoming 2008 Beijing Olympics, sports remain just as important to the Chinese culture. To mark contemporary time, children who participated in the Olympiad chose to depict sports that fill their lives, including swimming, rope skipping and running.

In the concluding competition held in Shanghai, the entries went through three rounds to reach three finalists. The judges included nationally renowned artists, art critics, educators and child art experts. Along with the SHCDF, the co-sponsors helped support a successful competition, including the Shanghai Children

International Culture Development Co., Children's Palace of China Welfare Institute and the Shanghai ToonMax television.

In the end, the chosen theme of sports helped boost the children's passion for creation but also encouraged them to try new activities and focus on a healthy lifestyle. From the exuberance of the imagination to observational study, the artworks represented colorful and meaningful lives shared by the participating children. After receiving a positive response from the child artists in this event, the SHCDF hopes to continue the Arts Olympiad with themes that strongly connect with children's lives, allowing the innovative spirit of a child's experience and vision reach new heights of creativity.